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UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

CHS/13/3
30 April 1991

Thirteenth session
Harare
29 April to 8 May 1991

Thirteenth Session of the Commission on Human Settlements opens in Harare, Zimbabwe

The opening ceremony of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements took place on Monday, 29 April 1991 at the Harare International Conference Centre, Zimbabwe. The Session was inaugurated by the President of Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

Eighty-four countries are represented at the meeting, 20 at the ministerial level. In addition, a number of United Nations agencies, international and non-governmental organizations are represented at the session.

The following were elected to the Bureau of the thirteenth session:

Chairman:	H.E. Mr. E.C. Chikowore Minister of Public Construction and National Housing, Zimbabwe
Vice-Chairman:	Dr. Sarath Obeysekera Chairman of Land Reclamation and Development Corporation, Sri Lanka
	Mr. Eduard Sarnaski Goskomarchitecture, USSR
	H.E. Dr. Azevedo-Brito Ambassador of Brazil to the Republic of Zimbabwe, Harare
Rapporteur:	Mr. H. van Eyk Ministry of Housing, The Hague, Netherlands

Message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

In his message to the Commission, the Untied Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar said that in working for economic and social progress and development, one of the

central issues that has to be addressed is to ensure adequate living conditions for all human beings.

He said that the Commission has the weighty responsibility of co-ordinating the imaginative and practical approaches outlined in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. In this connection, he expressed his satisfaction at the considerable progress that has been achieved in implementing the Strategy. Mr. Perez de Cuellar expressed his pleasure at the close cooperation between the Commission on Human Settlements, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the preparatory committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in keeping with the essential role that human settlements play in the protection of the environment and the achievement of economic development and social progress.

The Secretary-General observed that the Session of the Commission in Harare is taking place against a backdrop of change and uncertainty in international economic relations. The ongoing process of transformation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, moves towards greater economic and political integration of Europe and the process of democratization in many parts of the world are providing new hope for strengthened economic cooperation among nations. At the same time, however, the problem of external indebtedness in many developing countries and the slowing down of some of the major economies are impeding the revitalization and growth of the world economy. The problems for some of the developing countries have been further aggravated by the adverse impact of the Persian Gulf War. Present circumstances call for a major effort to strengthen multilateral cooperation in order to resolve the urgent problems facing our global society.

Statement by the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat)

In his address to the Commission, Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), noted that despite many laudable achievements throughout this century, one fundamental goal still eluded the international community, that of ensuring a satisfying living and working environment for all the members of the world community. This was particularly visible in the human settlements of the developing countries, where growing poverty, deplorable living and housing conditions, and increasing pollution were not only spoiling the environment, but also degrading the quality of life of their inhabitants.

All this was illustrative, the Executive Director, noted, of growing pressures on human settlements, pressures which would test the talents and skills of policy makers in the coming years. Addressing them successfully would not only determine the future of human settlements, but also to a large degree, the prospects for national development. These pressures were four-fold, the Executive Director noted. One, the growing integration of the world economy, which produced pressures on settlements of all sizes

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to perform their economic and service functions according to international standards of performance and efficiency; two, the rising expectations of the increasingly urban, better educated - and overwhelmingly young - present and future generations in the developing countries for better living and working conditions and for better housing and services; three, the need to balance the need for human settlements growth and economic development with the equally important need to preserve the environment and non-renewable resources; and, fourth, the inevitability of continued urbanization, which will produce even greater demand for shelter and services over the coming years.

The Executive Director then went on to suggest that the response to these challenges should be a greater emphasis on the human settlements sector in national policy-making; the strengthening of urban management capacity and local authorities; an enabling approach so that people can meet their shelter and other basic needs in a self-reliant manner; and a sustainable human development path which balances needs for economic growth with the need to preserve the environment and natural resources.

Dr. Ramachandran said that policies to manage fast growing urbanization in developing countries will have to become a priority of governments and the international community alike. Urban population of the developing countries, which was estimated at 675 million in 1970, is expected to reach nearly two billion in the year 2000, and approximately four billion by the year 2025. All human settlements, from rural centres to urban agglomerations must become the focus of a strategy, which will seek to promote both rural and urban development in an integrated programme and within the framework of national economic planning.

Inaugural address by H.E. the President of Zimbabwe

In his inaugural address to the opening session, the Zimbabwean President, H.E. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, said that it is imperative that human settlements be managed in a manner that ensures optimal use of scarce resources since it is the condition of such settlements which determines the level of development in any country. Each society should develop its own response to its own ecological problems, and it is in this context that an integrated approach which realizes the participation of the public, private and non-governmental and community based organizations and individuals becomes invaluable. Thus, participation of the people, local governments and community organizations is not only a central development goal, but is also a critical means of achieving sustainable development. The President said that resources must be mobilized at the global, regional and national levels for the development of shelter, infrastructural services and human settlements in general, particularly in developing countries with the least resources and where shelter problems are most acute and widespread.

"It is the obligation of the Commission to see to it that

efforts to fulfil their aims and objectives bear fruit by the end of this decade, otherwise decent shelter for millions of our citizens will remain merely a pipe-dream."

He said a shift in emphasis from the sectoral approach to the provision of shelter, and human settlements development within the global sustainable development concept, has been correctly projected in the two themes of the thirteenth session of the Commission, namely one, the significance of human settlements and global strategy for shelter to the year 2000 to the concept of sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the relationship between economic development and planning and management of settlements; and two, the use of energy by households, in construction and production of building materials with emphasis on the use of energy sources that are new and renewable and reduce pollution problems.

The Harare Session will continue until 8 May 1991.

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UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

CHS/13/4
1 May 1991

Habitat launches global data base on human settlements

Today, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) launched the first global data base on human settlements on the occasion of the 13th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements in Harare, Zimbabwe. Demonstrations are being run for the benefit of over 70 national delegations, representatives of other agencies and other observers from non-governmental organizations worldwide. The programme will be distributed free of charge to interested government officials and policy-makers. The programme, named the Human Settlements Statistical Data Base (HSDB.stat) amalgamates large amounts of data into one source and facilitates the storage, processing, and retrieval of statistics on human settlements. It has been designed both to enhance the capabilities of governments to formulate policy options based on sound and up-to-date statistical information and to provide them with a global overview of human settlements conditions and trends.

No computer expert is required to retrieve statistical information. The menu-driven data base is simple to operate which maximizes user accessibility to the data and minimizes training costs. After choosing an option, the user is guided by the programme through a simple step-by-step process which breaks down available data first into different topics and then descriptions appear on which specific data are available. For example, the user who wants to search for information by category or topic can choose the category "demography", the topic "urban/rural population", the sub-topic "urban population trends", and can then identify the figures for the total urban population aggregated by country or by regional levels. Having obtained that information, the user can then look through other categories within that same option --- land, economy, infrastructure, services, housing --- or return to the opening menu and search for data through a different option.

Although HSDB.stat allows easy access to statistical data, it can accommodate complex statistical analyses.

HSDB.stat is not a one-time output; it is an ongoing, long-term project. UNCHS (Habitat) plans to update it on a regular basis, to expand it by including additional statistical topics on which information will become available in the future, and to

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improve it on the basis of feedback expected from government agencies, international organizations, other units of the Secretariat and selected non-governmental institutions and organizations placed on the HSDB.stat mailing list.

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In parallel with the updating and expansion of HSDB.stat, UNCHS (Habitat) has launched a new data base programme specifically devoted to cities: the City Data Programme (CDP).

The programme has been launched in response to a widespread problem encountered at global, national and settlement levels - that is, the lack of timely, relevant and easily accessible data for urban analysis and policy-making. Because of the pronounced lack or poor quality of urban data, serious quantitative analysis is often not possible, resulting in costly urban policy failures. The main reasons for the unavailability of urban statistics are lack of appropriate methodologies and common statistical definitions; ineffective collection of urban data; and lack of collaboration and coordination among national and international data-collecting institutions.

The objective of the CDP is to set in place a cost-effective, worldwide data-collection/dissemination system which will facilitate monitoring and evaluation of urban conditions and trends. Ultimately, such a system will allow for the formulation of appropriate and responsive urban policies and thus contribute to the betterment of living and working conditions of urban populations.

The immediate objectives of the CDP are to design a global urban-data collection and dissemination system which will provide statistical support to urban policy-making; to develop a personal-computer application software which will be a tool for efficient organization and dissemination of urban data; to carry out a pilot study in a number of cities to test urban-data frameworks, key urban indicators, data-collection methods and organizational/institutional arrangements in a developing-country situation; and to disseminate urban information and tools for urban analysis by means of the distribution of a PC-CitiBase software package and other outputs, including a collection of city profiles and a series of wall charts.

The over-all funding requirement for the Programme, covering a period of four years, will amount to around $2 million. The Centre will provide funds for most of the global components of the Programme, up to approximately $600,000.